

## **NOTE TAKING**

### Lesson Plan Instructor Guide



COURSE TITLE: FIELD NOTE TAKING & REPORT WRITING

BLOCK: 13

DPS ACCREDITATION #:

COURSE LEVEL: 100

INSTRUCTIONAL GOAL:

At the completion of the course, each student should possess the following basic competencies:

1. Comprehend the nature of technical writing, as differentiated from other types of writing and how it applies to police writing.
2. Comprehend the ethical imperatives in technical communications.
3. Know and apply the usage and mechanics of standard American English.
4. Comprehend and apply the writing process, particularly in a police context.
5. Comprehend and apply the structure, organization and formats of various brief documents, such as memoranda, letters, investigative reports, and criminal complaints

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES:

At the conclusion of the course, the student should be able to do the following:

1. Given a hypothetical representation, write a complete and accurate police report.
2. Identify characteristics essential to a good report.
3. Identify agencies or individuals who may use police reports.
4. Identify when obscene, medical and scientific terms or slang may be used.
5. OBJECTIVES
6. Identify when and how an officers opinion may be included in a police report.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS: CLASSROOM LECTURE  
DISCUSSION  
ROLE PLAY

COURSE DURATION: 8HOURS

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CURRICULUM REFERENCES: Lunsford, Andrea. 1997. *The Everyday Writer*.  
New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc.

Lannon, John M. 1997. *Technical Communication*.  
New York: Addison-Wesley Educational Publishers.

Mehlich, Sue. 1997. *Technical Writing for Success*.  
Cincinnati: South-Western Educational Publishing.

Berry, Dean. 1990. *Report Writing*.  
Minneapolis: Law Enforcement Resource Center.

SAFETY CONSIDERATION: NONE

EQUIPMENT, PERSONNEL AND SUPPLIES NEEDED:  
COMPUTER, AUDIO AND VISUAL AIDS; WHITEBOARD

TARGET AUDIENCE: NEW MEXICO LAW ENFORCEMENT CADETS AND  
RECRUITS

COURSE PREREQUISITES: NONE

INSTRUCTOR CERT.: GENERAL POLICE

INSTRUCTOR RATIO: 1 / 60

EVALUATION STRATEGY: NEW MEXICO LAW ENFORCEMENT CERTIFICATION EXAM

AUTHOR & ORIGATION DATE: RICHARD MILLER, JANUARY 2000

REVISION / REVIEW DATE(S):

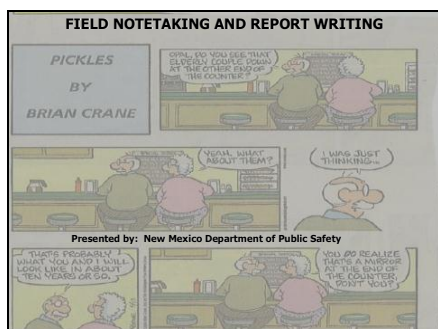
REVISED / REVIEWED BY:

COURSE OUTLINE:

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. Explain the differences between technical writing and other kinds of writing.
2. Discuss the ethical concerns in communication attendant to a given set of circumstances.

3. Write technical communications in standard American English, utilizing mechanics and manners of expression appropriate to a given situation.
4. Use the writing process in the preparation of documents which police officers write.
5. Write a variety of brief documents: letters, memoranda, explanations, investigative reports, and criminal complaints.
6. Identify characteristics as essential to a good report.
7. Identify questions which should be answered in a complete report.
8. Given a mock situation which requires police action, complete an acceptable police report.
9. Identify agencies or individuals who may use police reports.
10. Identify when obscene, medical and scientific terms, or slang may be used in a police report.
11. Identify when and how an officer's opinion may be included in a police report.
12. Identify uses of officer's notes, to include basics for writing reports, references for further investigation, admission as evidence, subject to scrutiny of court.
13. Define the New Mexico state law, which controls the privacy and security of law enforcement criminal history records.
14. Define the consequences of the improper release of law enforcement records.
15. Define those agencies and individuals to whom law enforcement records may be released.

**INSTRUCTOR NOTES:**

- Introduce Course
- Introduce Self
- Classroom and housekeeping rule
- Distribute Student Handouts (if any)
- Discuss Course Goal and Objectives

**Field Notebook**

- Law enforcement officers should consider the field notebook an essential part of their equipment.

**FIELD NOTEBOOK**

Law enforcement officers should consider the field notebook an essential part of their equipment.

**FIELD NOTES**

- Definition
- Purpose
  - Report Writing
  - References
  - Evidence

**FIELD NOTES****Definition****Purpose**

Report Writing

References

Evidence

### Report Writing

- Document parties contacted.
- Provide greater accuracy than Officers memory.
- Provide basis for reports.

### **REPORT WRITING**

Document parties contacted

.  
Provide greater accuracy than Officers memory.

Provide basis for reports.

### References

- Reference for further investigation.
- Comparison
- Sketches

### **REFERENCES**

Reference for further investigation.

Comparison

Sketches

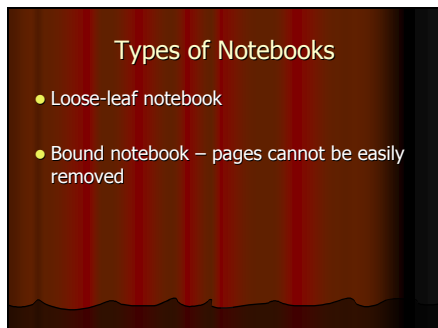
### Evidence

- Permanent record
- Court Testimony

### **EVIDENCE**

Permanent record

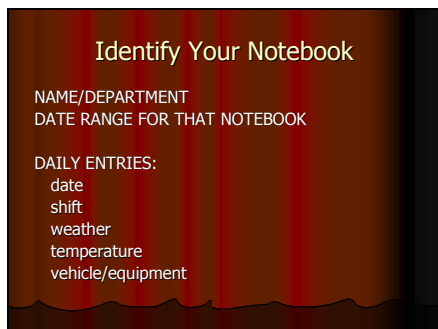
Court Testimony



### **TYPES OF NOTEBOOKS**

Loose-leaf notebook

Bound notebook – pages cannot be easily removed



### **IDENTIFY YOUR NOTEBOOK**

NAME/DEPARTMENT

DATE RANGE FOR THAT NOTEBOOK

DAILY ENTRIES:

date  
shift  
weather  
temperature  
vehicle/equipment

### Writing Instruments

- Black ink pen is preferred.
- Notes should be handwritten or handprinted.

### **WRITING INSTRUMENTS**

Black ink pen is preferred.

Notes should be handwritten or hand printed.

### Who, What, Where, When, Why and How

- Who –
- What –
- Where
- When
- Why
- How

### **WHO,WHAT,WHEN,WHY AND HOW**

- Who –
- What –
- Where
- When
- Why
- How

### Errors, Abbreviations and Shorthand

- In the event of errors.....
- Abbreviations
- Shorthand?

### **ERRORS, ABBREVIATIONS & SHORTHAND**

In the event of errors.....

Abbreviations

Shorthand?

### Initial Statements

- Verbatim?
- Have the person tell the story in his/her own way.
- Have them repeat it

### INITIAL STATEMENTS

Verbatim?

Have the person tell the story in his/her own way.

Have them repeat it

### Notetaking

- Field notes should contain information pertinent only to the event under examination. All notes of a personal nature or personal opinions should be omitted. Field notes should be accurate, complete and legible. Should be understandable to other investigators.

### NOTE TAKING

Field notes should contain information pertinent only to the event under examination. All notes of a personal nature or personal opinions should be omitted. Field notes should be accurate, complete and legible. Should be understandable to other investigators.

- The Call

### THE CALL

Cadets will watch the video “The Call” and take notes for a later required police report on the incident.

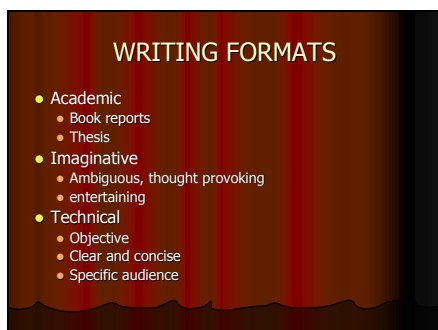


## **POLICE REPORTS**

Definition

Who sees them?

Ethical considerations



## **WRITING FORMATS**

Academic

Book reports

Thesis

Imaginative

Ambiguous, thought provoking

Entertaining

Technical

Objective

Clear and concise

Specific audience

**TECHNICAL WRITING DEFINED**

- Writing done in the workplace; subject is usually technical, written carefully for a specific audience; organization is predictable and apparent; style is concise; tone is objective and business-like; special features may include visual elements.

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Writing done in the workplace; subject is usually technical, written carefully for a specific audience; organization is predictable and apparent; style is concise; tone is objective and business-like; special features may include visual elements.

**Purposes and Uses of Police Reports**

- Permanent written record.
- Contain statistical information.
- Intelligence information.
- Assists with prosecution.

**PURPOSES AND USES OF POLICE REPORTS**

Permanent written record.

Contain statistical information.

Intelligence information.

Assists with prosecution

**Elements of Effective Reporting**

- A good report is one that enables any person to reconstruct the events exactly as they happened. It contains all essential facts so that a party who was not at the scene can understand exactly what happened.

**ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE REPORTING**

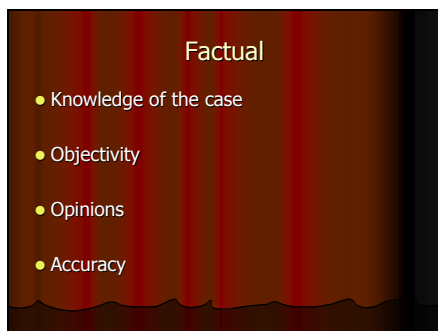
A good report is one that enables any person to reconstruct the events exactly as they happened. It contains all essential facts so that a party who was not at the scene can understand exactly what happened.

## ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE REPORTING



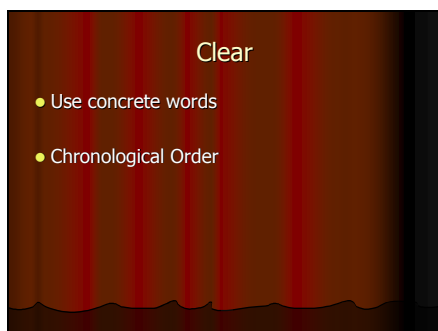
Factual  
Clear  
Concise  
Complete  
In-depth  
Short sentences/descriptive phrases  
Objective

CLAPPER VIDEO - see if cadets can write the entire string in one viewing



### FACTUAL

Knowledge of the case  
  
Objectivity  
  
Opinions  
  
Accuracy



### CLEAR

Use concrete words  
  
Chronological Order

### Concise

- Avoid wordiness but.....
- DO NOT sacrifice accuracy
- Include only pertinent facts.

### CONCISE

Avoid wordiness but.....

DO NOT sacrifice accuracy

Include only pertinent facts

### Complete

- Remember detail
- Ask who, what, where, when, how and why
- In depth narrative
- Remember – K.I.S.S.

Remember detail

Ask who, what, where, when, how and why

In depth narrative

Remember – K.I.S.S.

K.I.S.S. = Keep it simple sir

### Necessity of Good Reports

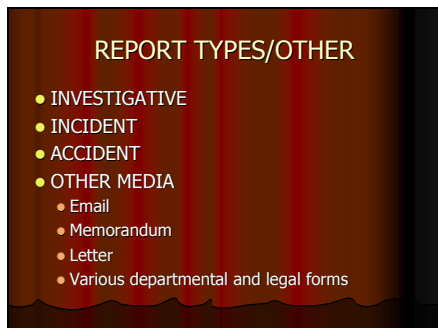
- Involved in every phase of law enforcement.
- What you write describes to the reader what happened.
- Who sees them?

### NECESSITY OF GOOD REPORTS

Involved in every phase of law enforcement.

What you write describes to the reader what happened.

Who sees them?

**REPORT TYPES/OTHER**

INVESTIGATIVE

INCIDENT

ACCIDENT

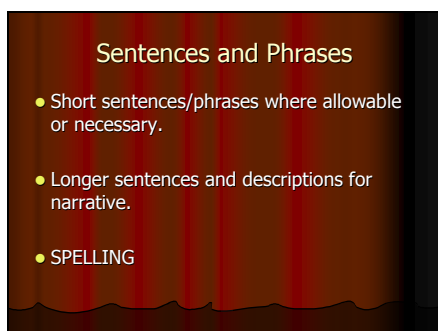
OTHER MEDIA

Email

Memorandum

Letter

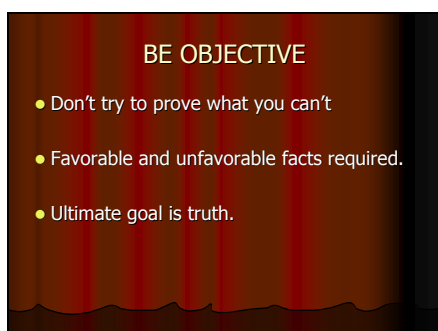
Various departmental and legal forms

**SENTENCES & PHRASES**

Short sentences/phrases where allowable or necessary.

Longer sentences and descriptions for narrative.

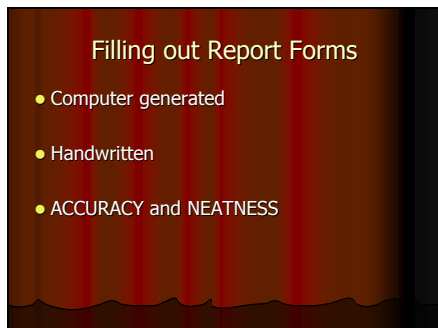
SPELLING

**BE OBJECTIVE**

Don't try to prove what you can't

Favorable and unfavorable facts required.

Ultimate goal is truth.

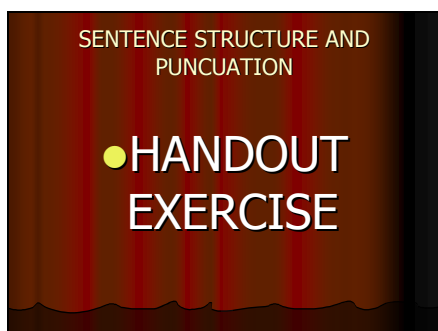


### **FILLING OUT REPORT FORMS**

Computer generated

Handwritten

ACCURACY and NEATNESS



### **SENTENCE STRUCTURE AND PUNCTUATION**

HANDOUT EXERCISE

Students will complete the handouts. Go over them as a class when finished.



### **USE OF FIRST PERSON**

Preferred for reports

Department requirements/SOP may dictate otherwise

### Fact and Opinion

- Factual information given accurately
- If you give an opinion, clearly state that it's yours

### FACT & OPINION

Factual information given accurately

If you give an opinion, clearly state that it's yours

### Narrative

- Required headings
- Tell what happened.
- Chronological order.
- The way you would say it.
- Summarize interviews/statements

### NARRATIVE

Required headings

Tell what happened

•  
Chronological order

•  
The way you would say it

•  
Summarize interviews/statements

### Criminal Complaints

- Should include jurisdiction.
- Common name of offense or offenses.
- Offender information.
- Elements of the offense.
- Statutes or ordinances violated.

### CRIMINAL COMPLAINTS

Should include jurisdiction.

Offender information.

Concise and definitive statement of facts.

Date and signature of arresting officer.

### Statements of Probable Cause

- Should include jurisdiction.
- Offender information.
- Concise and definitive statement of facts.
- Date and signature of arresting officer.

### **STATEMENTS OF PROBABLE CAUSE**

Should include jurisdiction.

Offender information.

Concise and definitive statement of facts

.  
Date and signature of arresting officer

### Law Enforcement Records

- Inspection of Public Records Act (14-2-1 NMSA)
- Improper release of confidential law enforcement records
- Freedom of Information Act

### **LAW ENFORCEMENT RECORDS**

Inspection of Public Records Act (14-2-1 NMSA)

Improper release of confidential law enforcement  
Records

Freedom of Information Act

### Other Records

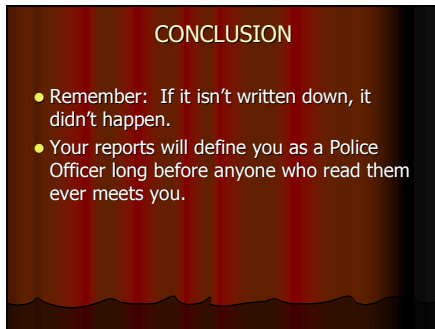
- Juveniles
- Victims of sex crimes
- MVD records

### **OTHER RECORDS**

Juveniles

Victims of sex crimes

MVD records



### CONCLUSION

Remember: If it is not written down it did not happen.

Your reports will define you as a Police Officer long  
Before anyone who reads them ever meets you

**COURSE LEVEL DEFINITIONS**

- 100 LEVEL: BASIC LEVEL - FOUNDATIONAL BLOCK OF INSTRUCTION. PRE-REQUISITE TO ALL HIGHER LEVEL COURSES.
- 200 LEVEL: INTRODUCTORY LEVEL. REQUIRES COMPLETION OF PRE-REQUISITE COURSE(S). [ONE OR MORE 100 LEVEL COURSE(S)]
- 300 LEVEL: INCUMBENT LEVEL. REQUIRES COMPLETION OF PRE-REQUISITE COURSE(S). [ONE OR MORE 200 LEVEL COURSE(S)]
- 400 LEVEL: ADVANCED LEVEL. REQUIRES COMPLETION OF BASIC ACADEMY AND POSSIBLY PRE-REQUISITE COURSE(S)

**CLASSIFICATION OF LEARNING OBJECTIVE**

- (C): COGNITIVE BASED LEARNING OBJECTIVE
- (P): PSYCHOMOTOR BASED LEARNING OBJECTIVE
- (C/P): BOTH COGNITIVE AND PSYCHOMOTOR BASED LEARNING OBJECTIVE
- (V): VALUE BASED LEARNING OBJECTIVE  
(Emphasizing Sacred Trust the community has placed in the hands of the law enforcement officer, addresses related professional conduct and respect for rights of citizens. All lesson plans must contain at least one value based learning objective.)

## **COURSE AUDIT**

PRIMARY INSTRUCTOR:

SECONDARY INSTRUCTOR:

SUPPORT STAFF (i.e.: Scenario Managers, Role Players, etc):

DATE(S)/ TIME(S) OF INSTRUCTION:

LOCATION OF INSTRUCTION:

**RECOMMENDED CURRICULUM CHANGES:** Identify inaccurate information, outdated information, new information to be added to update material, etc. (Use additional pages if necessary)

ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTOR COMMENTS: (If any portion of the course content was not presented, indicate the specific content here)

If course content other than the NMDPS TRD approved Basic or PST academy curriculum is taught, the alternative curriculum must be submitted to the Law Enforcement Academy Deputy Director's office and approved prior to delivery of the alternative instructional materials.

☐

Alternative curriculum was taught.

Accreditation number of alternative curriculum:

SIGNATURE

DATE

Primary Instructor

Reviewed by Program Coordinator

Reviewed by Bureau Chief

Reviewed by LEA Director or Designee